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Jeffers named Professor of the Year by Central Arkansas section of American Chemical Society



By Trennis Henderson, OBU vice president for communications

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Dr. Joe Jeffers, a longtime chemistry professor at Ouachita Baptist University, has been named the 2014 Professor of the Year by the Central Arkansas section of the American Chemical Society (ACS).

Jeffers, who serves as Ouachita's Charles S. and Elma Grey Goodwin Holt Professor of Chemistry and Pre-Medical Studies, was nominated for the ACS honor by the Ouachita Student ACS chapter. The nomination letter was submitted by Kelsey Willis, president of the chapter, and fellow officers Tim Horton, Crista Riggs and Jason Stevenson.

"We believe that Dr. Jeffers deserves to be considered for this award because of his long-lasting impact on the lives of his students," the students wrote.

"Dr. Jeffers had a deep knowledge of Organic Chemistry and has artfully perfected his teaching style to help his students understand it," they added. "Beyond his passion for teaching, Dr. Jeffers has also shown

sincere interest in the lives of his students. He always wants to know what drives his students and where they want to go in the future.

"Because of the emphasis he has placed on being excellent in matters of chemistry, cultural engagement and important decision-making, Dr. Jeffers has provided students at Ouachita with an ideal model for their professional selves after college," the nomination letter concluded.

Expressing appreciation for the recognition, Dr. Jeffers said, "While it is always nice to have one's work recognized, it is especially gratifying when one's students take the initiative and make the nomination. Students are why we are here. Watching them mature, both personally and as scholars, is the fun part. I am proud of any small part I may play in that process."

Jeffers, a 1966 Ouachita graduate, holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology from Purdue University and pursued postdoctoral study at the Open University in the United Kingdom and the University of Texas at Austin. He has taught at Ouachita since 1972 and served as the founding dean of the J.D. Patterson School of Natural Sciences from 2002 to 2011. He previously served as chair of the Department of Chemistry and chair of the Division of Natural Science.

According to the Central Arkansas ACS website, the American Chemical Society "is the world's largest scientific society and one of the world's leading sources of authoritative scientific information."

The Central Arkansas section seeks to "facilitate the career development of chemical professionals, improve the public's recognition and appreciation of the contributions of chemistry, expand our services to all of our members and prospective members working in all facets of chemistry and encourage the participation of students and young chemists in the activities of the society."